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Representative
Christine Rolfes
23rd District



Christine Rolfes

2007 Mid-Session Update



Dear Neighbor,

We recently reached the halfway point of this year’s Legislative Session and I am pleased to report that we have made great progress. This summer I went door-to-door talking to citizens and your priorities came through loud and clear:

- We need to invest in education and increase accountability in our schools.
- Health care costs are skyrocketing and we need to find ways of lowering costs for both families and businesses.
- The state needs to be in the business of attracting and retaining new jobs to our region.
- Fiscal responsibility is a must, and our government needs to make sure our tax dollars are being spent wisely and efficiently.
- Communities like ours need sustainable ferry funding.
- And finally, we need to maintain our unique quality of life by protecting our environment.

This newsletter is a quick update on what I have been doing in these important areas. I’m interested in your ideas and please feel free to contact me with any input you may have.

Sincerely,

Christine Rolfes

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State Representative
23rd Legislative District

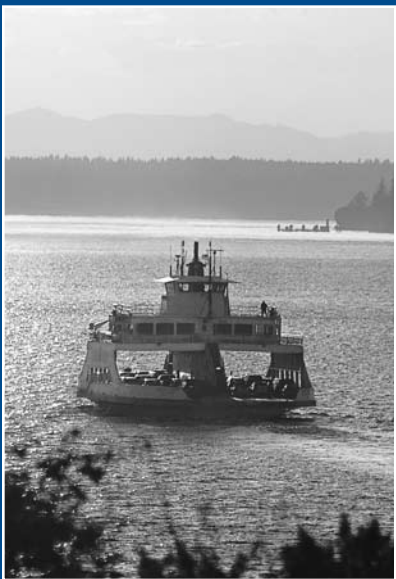


I WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!!!

Please email, call or write my office here in Olympia if you have any questions or opinions on the legislation we are considering this year. Also if you would like to subscribe to weekly legislative email newsletter please send a quick email to rolfes.christine@leg.wa.gov and we will sign you up. I look forward to hearing from you!

Rep. Christine Rolfes

2007 Mid-Session Update



Standing up for our Ferries

We have the largest ferry system in the country and the 3rd largest in the world – our ferries are an integral part of our lives. One thing is for certain: current ferry policy is broken.

There are three areas we need to address: 1) long-term planning to meet future needs 2) finding a sustainable funding source, and 3) creating equitable fare-making policy that incorporates the input of citizens.

This year I was proud to sponsor two different pieces of legislation to work toward these goals. The first creates a roadmap for our long-term planning goals. It incorporates cost reduction strategies and accountability measures to help make the system more self sustaining.

The second piece of legislation would allow a portion of our state's gas tax to be devoted to ferry costs. Gas tax revenues go toward replacing highways across the state. People depend on these roads to get to and from work and to move goods to market. Our ferries serve the same purpose and I will continue to work with my colleagues to get them the stable funding they deserve.



Protecting the Puget Sound

I currently serve as vice chair of the Select Committee on Puget Sound. This new committee has been working to come up with creative ways that the state can partner with local governments, businesses and civic organizations to create a coordinated plan to clean up the waters of the Puget Sound and Hood Canal.

I think we all agree – we want our children and grandchildren to enjoy the waters of the Puget Sound for years to come. Clean air and clean water are not Democratic or Republican issues – they are Washington issues.

Investing in Education

Funding our schools needs to be a top priority in Olympia. We can't just throw money at our problems hoping they will go away. This past summer, teachers, school administrators, business leaders and elected officials gathered together to come up with a plan to better our school system and increase accountability, from top to bottom.

Making sure our children succeed is a bi-partisan goal. Recently the House issued budget recommendations that will:

- Dedicate funds for class-size reduction.
- Allow for early learning programs and all-day kindergarten to make sure our kids are prepared.
- Target funding for new math and science teachers.
- Create grants for schools and communities to address the prevention, intervention, and retrieval of drop outs.

Providing our kids with a quality education is our state's paramount duty and I will work hard to make sure we fulfill that promise.



Lowering Health Care Costs



The rising cost of health care is one of the greatest challenges that families face. No one should lose their home or file for bankruptcy because they or a loved one has become ill. At the same time we need to make sure businesses can afford to offer insurance to their employees. Here are some of the things I have been working on here in Olympia.

- **Covering all Kids:** I have sponsored legislation to get all the children of Washington state health care coverage by 2010. This does not mean that they will all be covered by the state. We will be looking at ways to help businesses offer affordable health plans to their employees and families.
- **Assistance with Prescription Drugs:** One of the first bills we passed out of the House this session was a bill I sponsored to help seniors with the Medicare Part D prescription co-pays. As a result of federal prescription reforms, seniors were being forced to pay an additional fee that was an added burden to those on fixed incomes. Legislation we passed will pick up the tab for qualifying seniors.
- **Public Health Funding:** As a former member of the Kitsap County Board of Health, I know first hand how important public health programs are. Currently Washington ranks 44th in the nation on public health funding. Legislation I sponsored would create a dedicated funding source for these local resources that are vitally important in fighting communicable disease and keeping our children healthy.

Helping Our Economy Grow

One of the committees I sit on is the Community, Trade & Economic Development Committee. Fostering a positive business environment is vital if we are going to compete in the global market and that starts with governments and businesses working as partners, not adversaries.

One piece of legislation I sponsored would give local governments a new tool in attracting and retaining businesses to our region. The Local Infrastructure Financing Tool otherwise known as LIFT, gives city and county governments a new way to finance construction bonds to help pay for economic development projects without new taxes.



I am working to secure funding for the exciting new program called Kitsap SEED. This new business development is partnering with the city of Bremerton and the state to attract new "green energy" businesses to our region. These cutting edge companies will be a great source of high paying jobs for the future.

Finally, I have sponsored legislation that looks at expanding Olympic College's four-year baccalaureate programs. Providing an educated, high-skilled workforce is one of the best ways of attracting new businesses to our region.



Being Responsible with Tax Dollars

The government needs to be accountable with our tax dollars and has the responsibility to prioritize spending to ensure its efficiency and effectiveness. I have sponsored several measures this year to help stand up for taxpayers.

Property tax relief for families: House Bills 1155 & 2117 are bi-partisan measures that would re-enact the voter-approved 1% cap on property tax that was overturned by the courts.

Property tax relief for disabled veterans: House Bill 1102 would grant disabled veterans with incomes of \$70,000 or less property tax relief under the senior property tax exemption.

